





THE  
BATTLE OF EDDINGTON;

OR,  
BRITISH LIBERTY.

A  
TRAGEDY.

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1796.



PR  
5167  
P 3788

TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

WILLIAM PITT.

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SIR,

I VENTURED to dedicate to you the first edition of the *Battle of Eddington*, recommended only by the sincerity of my respect for you, as the champion of law and order. I less scruple to dedicate to you a second altered edition, which derives some real value from the applause of a British audience: for you have not ceased, ever since, to deserve equally the gratitude and admiration of all, by maintaining the unequal contest with your adversaries, though not, on your part, rendered even partially invulnerable by any sprinkling of execrable popularity.

Posterity, Sir, will do you the justice to remark, that had danger, at the present

#### DEDICATION.

period, been apprehended from the crown, the country would have found, in history, consoling proofs of its ability to cope with monarchs ; but that as it was to be looked for in the metaphysical spirit growing among the people, it stood in a new and alarming predicament, and imposed on you a task of the most arduous kind. They will take notice, that the same nation, in the last and present centuries, has forced the rest of Europe to unite for the preservation of its independence, and that it has at both periods manifested an equal contempt of the balance of power. If I speak as one prejudiced, beyond others, against its politics, the reason must be sought in my situation. It may not be deemed wonderful that the grandson, and representative, in the elder branch, of the founder of Pennsylvania, should think that a secondary mode of law-giving, which supposes necessary the destruction of antecedent systems of government.

DEDICATION.

It has been, of late, a matter of literary discussion, who is, or is not, the proper object of a dedication. I do not know whether a minister has been specifically allowed such, in case the dedicator prefers receiving no future benefit at his hands. If he is, I shall be happy that, in the present instance, a tribute has been offered, not unworthy of him,

I am, Sir,

Your most obedient

And most humble Servant,

JOHN PENN.

Spring-Gardens,

April 6, 1796.

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—What the lofty grave tragedians taught,  
In CHORUS or IAMBIC ; teachers best  
Of moral prudence, with delight received  
In brief sententious precepts, while they treat  
Of fate, and chance, and change in human life,  
High actions and high passions best describing.

PARADISE REGAIN'D.

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## DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

### MEN.

ALFRED, *King of England.*

EDMUND, *the Son and Heir of Alfred, then very young.*

MERVIN, *Prince of South Wales, dependent on Alfred.*

ETHELRED, *Minister and General of the English.*

CEOLUPH, *an English Nobleman.*

*A Danish Captain of Auxiliaries, brought to the Danes from Ireland.*

CEOLUPH'S *Vassal.*

*Officers, Harper, and other Attendants of the Queen.*

*Soldiers of different Nations engaged in the Battle.*

### WOMEN.

ELSITHA, *Queen of England.*

EDITHA, *an old Woman inhabiting the Cottage.*

*Female Attendants.*



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## ARGUMENT.

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IRELAND was very early, by the successful exertions of St. Patrick, converted to Christianity; the early progress of which also in England, had perhaps tended to create an intercourse of the most friendly sort, between the countries; for venerable Bede informs us, that, towards the end of the seventh century, Egfrid, king of Northumberland, wantonly invaded Ireland, “an harmless nation,” he says, “and always particularly friendly to the English.” In the year 853, the Danes established themselves by force in that country, and in the course of their wars with the inhabitants, were gradually converted to Christianity, without becoming less hostile. At the accession of Alfred, in 871, they had nearly possessed themselves of this island. He succeeded his brother in the twenty-second year of his age, having married the sister of Buthred, tributary king of Mercia, the beautiful and accomplished Elsitha, who supported with him the various hardships he was for some years destined to endure; and his eldest

son was named Edmund, who inherited some of his father's talents, but died before him. In their retreat among the marshes at Athelney in Somersetshire, (which has occasioned a comparison between his situation and that of Marius) Alfred witnessed the daily progress of the Danes, who obliged Buthred to fly to Rome, and who found in Ceoluph, called in the Saxon Chronicle "a certain thane," and one of Buthred's household, a person friendly enough to their views, to make them place him upon the vacant throne. During the time he was in favour with the Danes, and consequently in power, it appeared to be his whole object to enrich himself by extortion. Ethelred, a warrior eminent for virtues and talents, assisted Alfred in his warlike enterprizes, and probably during his distresses; for not long after them, he was made governor of London. He received also in marriage, his daughter Elfleda (called the English Zenobia), together with the earldom of Mercia.

While Alfred sallied occasionally from his retreat, with little hopes but to support himself and his followers, or take some revenge upon his enemies, he heard that Oddune, Earl of Devonshire,

had defeated an army of the Danes, from Ireland and other parts, who attempted to land near Appledore in that county, and had taken from them the famous standard, which they thought was enchanted, and promised them success in war. Their leader, Hubba, fell, and after burying him in a solemn manner, they betook themselves to their ships. On this event the prospects of Alfred began to brighten.

———— *pulcher fugatis*  
*Ille dies Latio tenebris*  
*Qui primus almâ risit adoredâ,*  
*Dirus per urbes Afer ut Italas,*  
*Ceu flamma per tædas, vel Euris*  
*Per Siculas equitavit undas.*

When first glad conquest smil'd with golden  
gleam,

And chas'd the dreary night, since Latium's foe,  
Dire Africk's chief, laid waste her reign,  
Fierce as the blazing torches glow,  
Wild as the storm that sweeps Sicilia's main.

Mr. BOSCAWEN.

He immediately went, disguised as a harper, to the Danish camp at Eddington, in Wiltshire, and by

his wit and skill in music, made himself so welcome to the Danes, that he had means of forming an exact judgment of the strength of the camp; which their dissolute and careless manner of life rendered more easily assailable. He then privately summoned those who remained attached to him from all parts; and a general meeting took place at Selwood forest, on the spot where "Alfred's Tower" was erected in honour of that event, by the family of Sir Richard Hoare, the present possessor of the estate. From hence the army marched, without halting, to Eddington; and though for a long time resisted by the Danes, with determined courage, it prevailed at length, and the scattered remnant of the enemy fled to a neighbouring castle, and soon after capitulated, in the year 880. Alfred gave the Danes their liberty, and granted to those, who embraced the Christian religion, a large tract of land in the northern parts of England. The princes of South Wales had already done homage to Alfred, for their principalities, and Anarawd, their elder brother, and prince of North Wales, now followed their example. Some accounts represent Scotland likewise, where Gregory the Great then reigned, as

courting the advantage of a similar union with this country. Having thus established and extended his power in the prime of life, and being in the highest degree, possessed of every great and good quality, he was enabled more effectually to labour in the great work of laying the foundations of the English government, before his death took place, A. D. 900.

The above facts are true, according to the most credible accounts; but the texture of the fable, and other incidents, are wholly imaginary.





## PROLOGUE.

*The picture deign to judge with candour due,  
We now prepare to exhibit to your view ;  
Help'd by no study of effect, that draws,  
In spite of nature, from the crowd applause :  
It aims alone to please, with sober art,  
Nor with pathetic varnish thrill the heart.  
The subject you will find (howe'er remote,  
To Britons born of memorable note,)  
The final contest, when the Danes, who long  
With rage relentless, and with numbers strong,  
Threat'ned the hopes of England to o'erwhelm,  
By Alfred's genius baffled, fled the realm ;  
And years of peace the victor could employ,  
To plan that freedom which we now enjoy.*

[to the side boxes.

*You to whom rank and fortune grant on earth  
A power unrivall'd to encourage worth ;  
See to what cause ye owe the prosperous state,  
Whence we are destin'd to behold, elate,  
The foreign tribes, who art's perfection boast,  
On all sides hasten to our island's coast :*

[looking round the house.

*And you, who shew, without a wish to roam,  
Britain's pre-eminence in arts at home ;  
And taste with industry combine, the land  
To adorn, and distant markets to command ;  
Observe the fortune of that glorious day,  
Since which the laws all equally obey ;  
Have rous'd your enterprize, and bid you feel  
Your own advantage in the public weal :*

[to the gallery.

*You too, on whose support our state relies,  
Of the just measures of the good and wise ;  
To which your ardour, by no hindrance check'd,  
And loyal spirit, wisely give effect,  
Proof to the specious arguments of foes ;  
See how that honour'd government arose :  
Which ever has secur'd, and will secure,  
Alike from violence the rich and poor ;  
And both of ease and freedom, gives you more,  
With comfort join'd, than has been felt before.*

[to all.

*If these reflections, the design suggests,  
Excite a generous bias in your breasts ;  
The solemn sentence we shall wait unaw'd,  
Sure you will mildly censure—or applaud.*

THE  
BATTLE OF EDDINGTON.

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ACT. I.

SCENE I.

*Eddington. The morning mists and shades, cast by the surrounding hills, render the distant objects confused. In the foreground, which is illuminated by the early and slanting rays, a cottage, at the border of a wood, on one side, and another wood on the opposite one. Enter the English driving the Danes before them. Afterwards,*

*Mervin, Ethelred. Soldiers waiting.*

*Ethelred.*

**A**DVANCE the prisoner, soldiers. Here I wait you. [*Exeunt Soldiers.*]

## SCENE II.

*Mervin, Ethelred.*

At length, brave Mervin, to our firm attack,  
Have the fierce Danes given way, and, o'er the  
plain,  
Soft-hearted pity hails the quiet hour,  
Hope promises so near of victory.  
Fortune looks kinder on us; yet I fear'd,  
Believe me, prince, our enemy's success,  
Who rallying, drove us, in the warm pursuit,  
Back from this conquer'd station, threat'ned worse.  
Much I suspect it sprang from treachery.

*Merv.* Thy words must fill each hearer with  
amaze.

Can Britons, valiant Ethelred, exist  
So base of soul, as privately to treat  
With foreign armies, and betray the cause,  
Both of their country, and the Christian world?

*Eth.* I fear it is too certain, and my fears,  
I trust, preserv'd us. I have now oppos'd  
As Alfred's general, with due success,  
Ere 'twas too late, the progress of the danger.  
A timely movement has secur'd, perhaps,

The British army, and this plotting lord,  
Cannot, I trust, surround us.

*Merv.* Who is this,  
Rank only makes conspicuous to disgrace him?

*Eth.* [*giving a letter.*] That scroll may best  
explain the doubtful story.

*Merv.* None, sure, can doubt. Lord Ceoluph  
has sign'd it,  
And treats full plainly with the troops of Ireland,  
Who war against us opposite that ground,  
Which, with his troops, he holds.

*Eth.* It is his vassal,  
Who, ere he left the precincts of our army,  
Was seized, and found the bearer of this letter.

*Merv.* What are thy orders? shall I seek the  
traitor,  
Among his very guards?

*Eth.* No; I will seek him.  
We must be secret here, lest he escape,  
Finding our purpose; and, in truth, respect  
Is his just due, till evidence disprove  
He entertain'd our former hope, to draw  
These Irish to our side.

*Merv.* Whence rose your hope?

*Eth.* Well thou remember'st that late victory

On Devon's shore, when Danish Hubba fell,  
And those who follow'd him, to invade us, fled  
Astonish'd at our unexpected valour,  
And sought their ships, leaving our men triumphant.

'Twas what first cheer'd our drooping spirits, and  
thou

Wast straight encourag'd to declare thy friendship;  
And, with thy subjects of South Wales, hast  
join'd us!

*Merv.* 'Tis true, we boldly fix'd on our allies;  
But how could Ireland's conquer'd sons discover  
Aversion to their lords, or love to us?

*Eth.* Know that when, mask'd in a mean harper's habit,

The king pass'd unsuspected many a day  
Within the Danish camp, he found those troops  
Muttering reproach against their pagan masters!  
While he, and every Briton, for the achievement,  
Were grac'd with their unanimous applause,  
Their zeal almost broke forth in mutiny.

*Merv.* Ah! why was not some earlier compact  
form'd?

*Eth.* The time would ill permit, and Alfred  
rather

Chose to forbear, when first our forces met,  
Than lose the occasion to surprise our foes,  
While they were plung'd in thoughtless revelry,  
And dreamt not of us—But the vassal comes.

*Merv.* Name then the service, which thy wisdom deems

Best suited to the powers I consecrate  
To the great cause we fight for.

*Etb.* Honour'd chief!

The inquiry, which our duty now enjoins,  
May soon determine thee—wait here its issue.

SCENE III.

*Mervin, Ethelred. To them re-enter Soldiers with  
Vassal in chains.*

*Etb.* Dost thou still plead, the object of thy  
errand

Was for the general good?

*Vass.* Truth cannot vary:

My first assertion may condemn, or clear me.

*Etb.* Favour will not be shewn to stubbornness.

*Vass.* I seek no favour, but from English laws.

*Etb.* Thy speech is bold: But, with this letter,  
say,

What message did thy lord entrust to thee?

*Vass.* [*Aside.*] How answer this? [*loud.*] It was  
to warn the Irish

That reconcilment would become two lands  
So leagu'd, as legends tell us ours have been,  
In constant amity, from earliest times:  
Supporters both of the pure Christian faith;  
(While unbelieving tribes nigh wrought its down-  
fall)

Till one late lost that honourable title.  
This he conjur'd the Irish to recover,  
Again unite with us, and dread to leave  
A growing labour to our single strength.

*Etb.* Thy tale is plausible, as is thy spirit  
Ready to improve the advantage of free laws;  
Whose lenity, though wise, oft screens the guilty,  
And renders odious the firm foes of treason.  
Yet do not they regard it. British justice  
Can note the obstacles by freedom rais'd,  
And glory in them.

#### SCENE IV.

*Mervin, Ethelred, Vassal, Soldiers. To them 2d  
Officer, and some of the Queen's Attendants.*

*2 Off.* Give, respected lord,



Quick counsel to the queen, the fair Elsitha,  
Who, with her son, young Edmund, seeks this  
cottage.

*Etb.* No sooner we succeed to advance one step,  
Than fate returns us to the ground we left.  
How came you?

*2 Off.* Captive led, from our retreat,  
By stragglers, seeking here their countrymen;  
But rescu'd, not far distant, by our troops.

*Etb.* How could they pierce the marshes which  
conceal'd you?

*2 Off.* They did not. Scarce you left us, when  
the queen

Found in the apartment an unopen'd writing,  
Which darkly warn'd the king of ill designs.  
Deaf to remonstrance, to o'ertake the army,  
She rashly ventur'd forth.

*Etb.* Thou hast, brave prince,  
An apt occasion to exert thy zeal:  
Go to the army, and conduct a band  
Hither, to guard the queen.

*Merv.* Ere long expect it. [Exit.

## SCENE V.

*Ethelred Attendants, Vassal, Soldiers.*

*Eth.* You from her right remove, my friends,  
the prisoner;  
But watch him near and closely. He must soon  
To Alfred answer, on a charge of treason.

[*Exeunt Att. and Vassal.*

## SCENE VI.

*Ethelred, Attendants, Soldiers. To them, enter  
Elsitba, Edmund, and other Attendants.*

*Els.* What did I hear of Alfred and of treason?  
Alas, I plainly see, I have been led  
By no false warning to resume my fear  
Of treachery's deeds, and tremble for his life!  
Those fetters, Ethelred, full surely prove it:  
Yes, they declare that enemies at home  
(The basest enemies) assist the Danes;  
They hold their meetings, and they whet their  
daggers.

Not all the qualities that grace your king,  
His spotless virtue, or his public spirit ;  
Not all his wisdom can unite the people. [*weeps.*

*Etb.* Princess, the danger is at length subdu'd,  
And what there was, thy fears had magnified.

*Els.* Ah, be not too secure: for have not, say,  
Too often base assassins, won by Danes,  
Pledg'd them, ere this, their horrible support ?

*Etb.* We now less fear it. His reviv'd ad-  
herents,

Rouz'd from the lethargy of long distress,  
And still excited by this day's advantage,  
Will keep a wakeful eye upon their prince,  
Through the contending crowd. Hope feeds their  
zeal.

Even now, among the troops, to every mind  
Does fond remembrance trace his various merits,  
Mark'd in their looks, their voices, as we pass;  
His matchless eloquence, his manly beauty,  
His martial glory is the theme of all.

1 *Off.* My lord, our purpose waits thy ap-  
probation.

*Etb.* You mean to search that cot ?

1 *Off.* Yes; o'er the plain  
Its solitary shelter caught our notice,

Shewn by the rising sun ; we came forthwith :  
We would prepare it for the queen's reception.

*Etb.* Do so ; but learn, I must depart in speed ;  
And be not too long absent from your queen ;  
Though you be thus advis'd. Suspect all counsel,  
Till Mervin's presence, with the guards, secure you.

[*Exeunt 1 Off. and some Attendants, into the cottages.*

### SCENE VII.

*Elsitha, Edmund, Ethelred, Attendants, Soldiers.*

*Etb.* Soldiers, return, like lightning, to the  
army ;

And tell the king what here demands his presence !

1 *Sold.* We shall not linger in our way, to  
drive

Invaders from the land.

*Etb.* 'Twas spoke like Britons. [*Exeunt Soldiers.*

## SCENE VIII.

*Elsitba, Edmund, Ethelred, Attendants.*

*Eth.* Princess, the expected chief will soon  
relate

What haste forbids me, and dispel thy fears. [*Exit.*

## SCENE IX.

*Elsitba, Edmund, Attendants.*

*Els.* Ill hadst thou far'd, poor wretch, had it  
prov'd true

Thy father had been slain. How wouldst thou  
hope

To rule a country? how conduct thyself

When we had triumph'd over these our foes?

*Edm.* But often, sure, I heard thee tell my  
father,

That we should never gain the victory.

*Els.* Now, child, the times are chang'd; the  
wise assure us

Our new allies give us full cause for hope.  
We shall with ease subdue our adversaries.

*Edm.* Who is the ally?

*Els.* The powerful king of Scotland;  
Who sends his forces to support thy father;  
And would ensure thy birthright by his arms.

*Edm.* May Heaven reward him for his gracious  
aid

Against the wicked; those who slew its priests,  
And burnt the holy places of its worship.

*Els.* But all their brave endeavours will be vain,  
If thou, an helpless claimant of the crown,  
Canst not compose the jarring interests,  
And guard with policy what they restore,  
For thine, and England's surety.

*Edm.* I will try:  
For I remember what my father said.

*Els.* What hast thou heard him say?

*Edm.* "A king's first care,"  
He told us, "was to single virtue forth;  
And make mankind respect its bright example."  
Oft too he said, "he ought not to forget,  
Those trusty subjects, who, in all his sufferings,  
Fought at his side, or shar'd in his distress."  
So would I treat my friends.

*Els.* And how thy foes?

*Edm.* As I have seen my father.

*Els.* How was that?

*Edm.* He spared the conquer'd Danes, and  
heard their prayers;

Saying, "resentment towards our enemies  
Disgraced the conqueror, and was mean and  
useless.

The humbled wretch could not be humbled more;  
'Twas folly then to spurn his gratitude,  
When clemency might win it, fix his love,  
And in his heart, though savage, plant the seeds  
Of justice, loyalty, and mild religion."

*Els.* [*embracing him.*] Bless'd be thy memory,  
and that ready judgment

Which stamps its use; when slow maturing time  
Shall waken in thy mind its latest fruits,  
Mayst thou, my child, reward a parent's care;  
Mayst thou pursue the footsteps of thy sire,  
And reach, with him, true glory.

## SCENE X.

*Elsitha, Edmund, Attendants. To them, enter  
Attendants from the cottage.*

1 *Off.* Queen, we found  
The tenant of this cot, oppress'd with fears  
Which the loud tumult of the battle round her  
Had cherish'd long. The well known garb of  
Britons,  
As on our entering troop she fix'd her eyes,  
At once reliev'd her mind, and cheer'd her aspect.

## SCENE XI.

*Elsitha, Edmund, Attendants. To them, enter  
Editha, from the cottage.*

*Els.* Much we rejoice, good cottager, to think  
Thou art not willing to withhold thy aid  
From Britons in distress.

*Edm.* Whate'er assistance



Lies in the power of helpless Editha,  
You may command. It is, alas! too small,  
Besides her daily prayers to righteous Heaven  
For the good king's success.

*Els.* Lead, worthy friend,  
Where we may now repose: and take our thanks.  
Know, loyalty in dangerous times like these,  
Honours, however helpless, those who feel it,  
And merits gratitude from all that's virtuous.

[*Exeunt Elsitha, Editha, and Edmund, into  
the cottage.*]

## SCENE XII.

*Attendants.*

1 *Off.* (*to the barper.*) Methinks your art, though  
not intended e'er  
For such a place, were properly employ'd  
To soothe the queen, and, while it can, prevent  
The ills of painful thought.

2 *Off.* 'Tis wisely counsell'd:  
Yes; let this desert hear harmonious sounds.

1 *Off.* At least, if ever, now she needs relief,

When treason to war's terrors adds its own,  
So fearfully o'ermatching female weakness.

## SONG.

*You whom low gain, in secret, arms  
Against fair Britain, favour'd queen,  
Ab, bear her plead her varied charms,  
Of social towns, and meadows green!  
See bliss obey her sage command;  
And spare, ab spare your native land!*

*If other climes his gifts produce,  
Where vintage crowns the race of toil;  
Or fruits of a more tasteful juice,  
That ripen in the sunny soil;  
Heaven showers on us with lavish band;  
Then spare, ab spare your native land!*

*Our chosen fields, the happy reign  
Of freedom boast, with reason join'd;  
Hence industry o'er every plain  
Surveys the wonders she design'd:*

*Wide harvests wave, flocks feeding stand,  
And bid you spare your native land.*

*No common ardour fires the soul  
Of Britons that, to Alfred true,  
Mark his past laws the unjust controul,  
And hope his future toils to view.  
For he your rising greatness plann'd,  
Who bids you spare your native land.*

*He, to repel the furious foe,  
First shelter'd with a fleet our coast ;  
(Reserv'd our best defence to show,)  
Which henceforth shall be Britain's boast.  
This praise, at least, his deeds demand ;  
Then spare, ah spare your native land !*

*Or if this king, this country, fail,  
Ye bold, to merit your applause ;  
Haste where less haughty lords prevail ;  
Where justice springs from freer laws.  
Go ; ease our fears, a blameless band ;  
And spare, ah spare your native land !*

## SCENE XIII.

*Attendants. To them enter Ceoluph.*

1 *Off.* Thou, whom we see approaching to this spot,  
Art come, we hope, and by thy garb presume,  
With friendly purpose.

*Ceo.* Friendly sure to Britons  
He comes, who, summon'd to a meeting here,  
Aims only to deliberate on their welfare.  
Yes, Ceoluph still owns unrivall'd zeal ;  
And say, intent upon what separate project,  
You shun the war ?

1 *Off.* Our office is our answer :  
We are not among those the war has brought.

*Ceo.* What ! is the queen arriv'd ? the event I  
feel

Sufficient to alarm a loyal breast :  
But say, can Ceoluph's advice avail her ;  
Or has she met with earlier counsellors ?

1. *Off.* Some we have seen, and thankfully  
decline

The courteous offer.

*Ceo.* Yet I still may serve you  
By joyful tidings: for I wait the king.

*Vass.* [*behind the scenes.*] Yes, 'tis Lord Ceoluph. O give me way.

*Ceo.* These accents seem familiar to my ear.

1 *Off.* We only know 'tis one accus'd of treason;  
Perhaps for this thou hast the royal summons.

#### SCENE XIV.

*Ceoluph, Attendants.* To them, enter *Vassal*,  
*breaking from his keepers.*

*Vass.* O lend thy aid to suffering innocence!  
Hear, my good lord.

*Ceo.* I know this man, my friends,  
And curious am to learn what shameful charge—

*Vass.* I heard the news of the intended  
meeting,

My lord, deliver'd in a well known voice,  
And came. O tell the king my innocence.

*Ceo.* Let me in private question him, my  
friends;

I gather from his agitated air,

He less confusedly would unfold his tale  
If unobserv'd.

1 Off. [*to the Attendants.*] Retire you to the  
wood

From whence the prisoner came, and thence ob-  
serve him,

As is your duty, but remote from hearing:

We, with the caution which our general counsell'd,  
Will, in the cottage, near the queen remain.

[*going.*

Ceo. But still beware lest her too great impa-  
tience

Afflict her in the important conference ;

Say not the king waits here.

1 Off. My lord, I will not.

[*Exeunt 1 Officer with a few into the cottage,  
and the other Attendants into the wood.*

#### SCENE XV.

*Ceoluph, Vassal.*

Ceo. Now we may freely speak. What mean  
those chains ?

Do they not bode such knowledge of our purpose,  
As blasts all hope.

*Vass.* No, thanks to the old spirit  
Of Saxon liberty, whose nicety brooks not  
That summary conviction which denies  
The respite I enjoy. I firmly answer'd,  
Trusting that time would furnish means of flight.  
O my good lord, how hadst thou smil'd to hear  
Thy slave debate the interests of Ireland! [*laughs.*

*Ceo.* 'Twas wisely done; the plea that freedom  
yields us,  
Shall make its cause our own, though we despise it:  
But say, must Alfred and his family  
Meet at my risk; he will not soon release me,  
Hearing from them that treason's in the wind.

*Vass.* I guess'd thy late injunction was to  
hinder  
The queen's ill-timed appearance, and 'twas well;  
Yet art thou ignorant of half our hopes.  
Know, enterprise will have a noble field,  
And we be gainers by our seeming hindrance;  
Retarded only with his queen and son,  
No vulgar hostages, to join the Danes.

*Ceo.* What is thy plan? say, did the Danes  
suggest,

On my first message, any means of this?

*Vass.* Yes; so they hop'd to repossess this station;

I thought the mention useless, when our general  
Led on the charge, and overbore resistance.  
Then quickly seize the occasion: feign a flight,  
The Irish will pursue, and our mix'd bands  
From ambush burst on these defenceless quarters.

*Ceo.* But why defenceless? you expect I judge  
The guards.

*Vass.* They will possess the avenues  
Conducting to this ground.

*Ceo.* And so repel us.

*Vass.* No; beneath one a Roman arch was found  
To pass unseen, that in the distant wood  
Is open'd, and appears. 'Twas pierc'd so late,  
Not even the neighbouring tenant of this cottage  
Can give due notice of the wish'd surprise,  
Should you attempt it; but its outlet, mark'd  
By yonder rugged hillock, will admit you  
Ev'n to this spot, deceiving every guard.

*Ceo.* I know not how we may fall back un-  
seen

Again, so far retreating under ground;  
Above it, now we shall be closely watch'd.



*Vass.* Then quickly leave the king, and seek  
the army.

*Ceo.* No; first the chance of a more flattering  
fortune

Must not pass slighted by; for, be assured,  
I meditate one final effort now  
To gain the royal favour, long enjoy'd  
By the unworthy minions of his reign.  
O think how I should triumph in their downfall!—  
Besides, the English cause is now successful.

*Vass.* Be not deceiv'd; he never will desert  
His loyal servants.

*Ceo.* Am I then to learn  
That interest is man's god, and Alfred human?  
My power is matchless in the land, my will,  
If kindly he receive the overture,  
Prepar'd to crown him a despotic prince.

*Vass.* Thou wilt delay the attempt, my lord,  
till time  
(Which we most fear,) give credit to the charge;  
And ev'n thy own retainers dare not aid thee.

*Ceo.* If I succeed in this, remember, thou  
Wilt soar with me to all the heights of favour.

*Vass.* And, if thou fail, captivity will sink me.

*Ceo.* That is less sure—When thou could hope  
so late

For means of flight, what raises thy despair?

*Vass.* But see, the king approaches with his  
followers;

To wait their coming might be fatal to thee,

If he have heard the tale of our detection;

And hazard thy arrest—See, he speaks to them.

*Ceo.* 'Tis but to enjoin them to remain aloof;

While he comes on alone. Thanks to yon  
thickets,

He has not seen one messenger to instruct him;

Do thou draw only farther still from hence

The queen's attendants, lest discovery

Again be risk'd.

*Vass.* I go, without delay. [Exit.

#### SCENE XVI.

*Ceolupb.* To him; enter *Alfred*.

*Alf.* A sound of voices reach'd me, as I came,  
Assisted by this stillness of the air;

I fear, my lord, I mar some conference.

*Ceo.* 'Twas one subordinate, who listening took  
His orders ; he resigns his place to Alfred.

*Alf.* This careful secrecy becomes a meeting  
Of different sort ; time only now permits me  
To ask thee the position of thy troops,

*Ceo.* Yet did I dare to think, ere Alfred form'd  
The solemn contract between king and people,  
And rude beginnings of the British state,  
The well-meant counsels of plain honesty  
Might gain his patient hearing.

*Alf.* Is't then so ?  
And mean'st thou to discuss what might employ  
A senate long, now in the hour of battle.

*Ceo.* Yes ; for 'tis now that prudence most  
requires  
The close discussion of this weighty subject ;  
While thou hast yet within thy power the means  
To make it useful. I bestow those means :  
My well-prov'd followers, if thou say the word,  
Shall, when the rest victoriously disband  
After our tedious toils, remain in arms ;  
They shall compel the people to adopt  
What laws thou wilt, and prove that Ceoluph  
May be suspected, but was ever loyal.

*Alf.* 'Tis, I acknowledge, an important counsel,  
Nor mark'd with feeble resolution, this  
To levy war upon my subjects, led  
By dreams of fancied good. Yet let me say,  
Our maxims differ wide; I hold, my lord,  
That only is, in states, an wholesome change  
Which springs from peace and unanimity.

*Ceo.* May then no spirit of rebellious sort,  
We could prevent, burst forth among the people,  
And spread destructive to whate'er we prize?  
If so, to extinguish it asks active care.

*Alf.* What instance canst thou bring in proof  
of it?

*Ceo.* Their swelling hopes, that undissembled  
zeal  
With which all cry, "Alfred will surely grant us  
Those rights our Saxon ancestors possess'd;  
He will restore us the regretted jury."

*Alf.* 'Tis that same argument, which, in thy  
judgment,  
Declares them wrong, that rescues them, in mine,  
From every blame, and justifies their hopes:  
For be assur'd, if any recompence  
Of public services to me were grateful,  
It were that Britons should, in future, say,

“ Alfred establish’d here the ancient jury.”

*Ceo.* Did I, as clearly know that government  
Thy wisdom plans, as this divulged intention,  
I should not hesitate, my liege, to affirm  
What rights consist with it, or what possess  
Too uncongenial natures to endure it.  
If to the people’s judgment thou confide  
The helm of state, thy reverence of their will,  
Steer they or wrong or right, will ne’er prevent  
them.

*Alf.* Think not I wish democracy should rule  
In England’s realm : too rare is its success.

*Ceo.* And yet I know no other government ;  
Where such wide liberty of speech and action,  
Unaw’d by power, can prove the people’s boast.

*Alf.* Instead of governments which have been  
tried,  
Think but of one Rome’s sages sought to try,  
And ’twill unriddle all the mystery :  
For ’tis that time (which never may return)  
When theory, to statesmen oft delusive,  
Can, without dread of harm, give law to practice.  
I hope, my lord, to see in this our island,  
Power duly dealt among three different orders ;

King, lords, and commons; and Heaven speed  
their counsels!

*Ceo.* [*Aside.*] Here is an unexpected road to  
favour :

I'll instant strike into the lucky track.

*Alf.* What sayst thou of our hope to realize  
The beauteous visions of immortal men  
In the calm shades of philosophic ease ?

*Ceo.* Mute with amazement, I contemplate, sire,  
That penetrating sense which could discover  
When theory lays down her harlot arts,  
And give her heighten'd charms secure to Britons.  
Yes, let me now congratulate the country,  
In which true liberty shall first be seen :  
The nations of the earth, in future times,  
Shall view with envy this high-favour'd isle ;  
(Where policy unites each true advantage,)  
And, while they sum its blessings, think of Alfred.

*Alf.* It gives me joy, since thou art satisfied  
With my design, that such repugnance conquer'd,  
Leaves us no further subject of delay.

*Ceo.* Believe it, ardently, my liege, I hope  
To second thy great aim, and, if thou speak,  
Hasten to execute whate'er commands

Are given, and justify thy confidence :  
Name but the office thou design'st.

*Alf.* My lord?

*Ceo.* No slow or sluggish agent shall I be  
To do thy will ; tell me, I say, my liege,  
What warlike enterprize shall be my task  
To forward thy intent, and how I may,  
Partaking of thy councils, prove at once  
My secrecy and zeal.

*Alf.* The topic seems  
More copious than erewhile, nor longer fit  
To be debated here. Tell me, my lord,  
Where lie thy troops ?

*Ceo.* That path conducts to them.

*Alf.* Then know, I purpos'd to inspect them  
with thee,  
From some adjoining place, and on our way  
Can hear whatever thou mayst choose to treat of.  
Dispatch that business soon, which, when I came,  
Employ'd thee, and o'ertake me in the wood.

[*Exit.*

## SCENE XVII.

*Ceoluph.*

*Ceo.* I see how likely is my suit to prosper.—  
Neglect in one, whom we can harm, becomes  
Intolerable as insult.—[*looking after Alfred.*]

My obedience

'Thou hast once more, 'tis after that—revenge.



## ACT II.

## SCENE I.

*The progress of the day discovers the background of the prospect, hitberto in shade, as the foreground is at present. The ruins now appear, on a distant hill, of a monastery, which had been destroyed by the Danes ; and near which, as was usual, a stream passes, rushing down the declivity.*

*Attendants.*

1 *Off.* I tremble, hearing you, to view yon scene  
Display'd, so brightly, by the ascending sun,  
The work of no far distant enemy.  
Then has the chief, by this deceitful tale,  
Withdrawn the king from hence.

2 *Off.* We could not find them ;  
Though promised Alfred would survey the  
ground,

So better to secure the queen ; and then  
Would hasten to her presence.

1 *Off.* While designs  
Are form'd against us, do our guards delay?

2 *Off.* No ; late we saw the prince disposing  
                  them,  
And told him our distress, ere we return'd  
To make it known to you. Behold, he comes.

SCENE II.

*Attendants. To them, enter Mervin.*

1 *Off.* Prince, we would gladly learn what cause  
                  of fear  
This lord's suspicious conduct gives to us.

*Merv.* The general's promptness has remov'd  
                  already,  
My friends, all cause ; he knew no hostile force  
Could leave the assembled army, ere these suc-  
                  cours ;  
He rather hopes the king will be deceiv'd  
By some new wile ; from which his wisdom guard  
                  him !

If the queen need my presence, I would know,  
And do her will ; I shall not be far off. [*Exit.*

*SCENE III.**Attendants.*

1 *Off.* I will convey the message, and meanwhile  
Let music's sound exhilarate the queen,  
As she desir'd, commending graciously  
Our late attention. [*Exit into the cottage.*

*SCENE IV.**Attendants.*

2 *Off.* [*to the barper.*] Far thou wilt not, sure,  
Seek for a subject ; to the worthy prince,  
Who late has left us, thou may'st now do honour,  
And sing the praise of Arthur, and of Wales.

## SONG.

*When Arthur fill'd the island-throne,  
He stemm'd the boisterous flood that pour'd  
The exhaustless strife ; on hosts alone  
The champion urg'd his guardian sword,  
Piercing the Angle's firm array ;  
The Power invok'd to Christians known,  
As shed its shining blade a ray  
Auspicious to the Briton's fame,  
And, to the savage tribe of Thor,  
Amazement, o'er the files of war,  
And death, where'er it darted, came.*

*Chiefs prostrate lie, whose aspect awes,  
As oaks with ruin heap the ground,  
Fall'n, ere the threats of lightning pause,  
And cease the whirlwind-waste around.  
For toils like these, the Cambrian sings,  
Absolv'd from nature's common laws,  
The destin'd sire of future kings  
Reclines on flowers of fairy land ;  
And, o'er the race he fir'd in vain  
With freedom, and his ancient reign,  
Again shall stretch his wish'd command.*

*But tell, my harp, that from on high  
Subdued the terrors of the tomb;  
He sees fierce arts from Albion fly,  
Rejoicing in his country's doom;  
Sees old Consent, and public Care  
Greet us with titles arms deny,  
And sends his banish'd bands to share  
A friendship may forever live;  
While to the land the victor sways  
Their names alike (if such be praise)  
The foes of other ages give.*

## SCENE V.

*Attendants. To them, enter Alfred meeting  
1 Officer.*

*1 Off.* The prince, my liege, has doubtless made  
our state

Known, as you pass'd the guards.

*Alf.* 'Tis true, I know it;  
But Ethelred ere this had told me all,  
When, with the traitor Ceoluph, I saw him.

1 *Off.* Joyful, as Britons, we behold our king  
Deliver'd from his snares.

*Alf.* I know not, friends,  
If we may suffer more from his designs.  
Suspicious of his faith, I had resolv'd  
With him to view his troops : which late employ'd  
us :

But when we saw the distant Ethelred,  
This traitor, fertile in deceitful prettexts,  
Told me,—that now to better counsellors  
He left his king, and went where duty call'd him.  
Long I observ'd him march with hurried pace ;  
But could not learn his purpose, till at length  
He disappear'd among his own retainers.

1 *Off.* What dost thou order us, my liege, to do ?

*Alf.* Fly with the queen and prince, avoiding  
here

To leave them longer to the event of war.  
By me instructed, Ethelred will keep  
His trusty bands prepar'd to second Mervin,  
And rush, if needed, to protect this station.

[*Exit into the cottage.*]

## SCENE VI.

*Attendants.*

1 *Off.* Well does the king, to guard, with each  
precaution,

His helpless queen against a barbarous foe.

2 *Off.* Thy words denote unwonted apprehension.

1 *Off.* The woman's late discourse, had'st thou  
with us

Enter'd the cottage, might have prov'd to thee

What terror may these savage tribes inspire,

Uninfluenc'd by respect for sex or age.

2 *Off.* 'Twere dreadful, surely ; but since now  
arriv'd,

The guards, I hope, will cover our retreat.

1 *Off.* Heaven grant they do—But hark, the  
latch is mov'd :

Fall back. The approaching king will soon instruct us.

## SCENE VII.

*Enter Alfred, Elsitba, and Attendants, from the cottage.*

*Alf.* Yes ; hasten to the pious hermit's cell  
I have describ'd, hid in embowering woods ;  
Which, though not distant, has been still conceal'd  
From wandering Danes, and ever must defy  
Their closest search. The deviating track  
Is mark'd too plainly by the signs I nam'd,  
To cost thee pains to find, or need inquiry.  
Haste, my Elsitba ; now delay were fatal.

*Els.* Ah ! rather fly this unavailing strife  
Betimes, and in some corner of the earth  
Let thy sad family enjoy thy presence,  
And boast the certainty thou liv'st to cheer them.  
When war with treason threats, and this drear wild  
Renders more terrible the form of danger,  
How killing 'tis to part—that thou may'st meet it !

*Alf.* Whence is this fear ? or where, in thee  
once seen,  
The unshaken spirit which so long surpris'd me



While lurking in our wretched residence?  
Where the gay smiles, that half o'ercame my  
sorrows?

*Els.* If duty warn'd me never to make known  
Wishes and fears that might increase thy troubles,  
Or interfere beyond what suits a queen,  
Think'st thou I felt, though silent, less alarm?  
Employ'd in studious privacy alone,  
(Whose charms thou taught'st me) or domestic cares,  
I aim'd not to embarrass lawful power  
By base intrigue, or open opposition:  
On such forbearance resolutely bent,  
I sought, and gain'd the favour of the people.

*Alf.* Even as thy virtue merits admiration,  
So may thy firmness, my *Elsitha*, shine  
With equal rays, and charm with blended lustre.  
How should we mourn, O, think, each ruin'd hope,  
Misled by coward fear, or senseless caution?  
Ill-fated outcasts in some foreign land,  
Soon should we find the poverty we bear  
Our future portion, or rely alone  
On pitying courtesy for ill-earn'd ease,  
And, in its very kindness, feel our fortune.

*Els.* And dost thou urge to me those weighty  
reasons?

Or think I swell with the proud hope of greatness?—

O Alfred, how should I rejoice to share  
Even the poor rustic's frugal, humble lot,  
So I might see in safety those whose love  
Far dearer ties had rooted in my heart.  
Nor would, I trust, thy sorrows in retirement  
Be thus oppressive ; but when study's charms  
(Which most avail to banish thy sad thoughts)  
Have ceas'd their influence, my unwearied cares—

*Alf.* 'Tis not the fear of want, but of disgrace,  
Visits the bosom of the wise or virtuous.  
Base is the ruler, if, while hope remains,  
He leaves his country threat'ned by a foe ;  
But if his steady zeal be known to all,  
And lawless violence alone prevail  
By force of numbers, or the wrongs of fortune,  
Then he may quit, without a blush, the contest ;  
Then foreign kings receive him with respect,  
And all their subjects, when they see, applaud  
him.

*Els.* That time is come for thee. O, instant  
bear us  
From this devoted land ! where hope no more  
Can tempt to stay.

*Alf.* [*separating with enthusiasm.*] Hope, sayst thou?

*Els.* And pray tell me,  
When thou hast suffer'd many a mournful year  
The worst calamities sad war inflicts,  
And art again contending in the field  
With the same barbarous and successful foe,  
From farther strife what can thy country hope?

*Alf.* Each flattering destiny that can exalt  
A nation's glory ; cultivated fields,  
Where now inhospitable forests spread,  
And, where the Thames reflects our humble  
                    dwellings,  
The capital of earth, and happy seat  
Of the protected arts ; its busy streets  
Crowded with industry's rejoicing sons ;  
While on the matchless stream unnumber'd masts,  
Like a wide wood, attract the stranger's eye,  
And prove the commerce of the world our own.

*Els.* O cease to be deluded by thy wishes,  
And in thy fruitless rhapsodies proceed ;  
Cease to repeat what I so oft have heard thee,  
That we should be renown'd in history  
For noble deeds, be sovereigns of the sea,  
Happy at home ; and held abroad the refuge

Of weakness still, and terror of ambition—

No ; never, never shall such times arrive.

*Alf.* If I have rais'd too high my expectation,  
'Tis not, be sure, without sufficient cause.

In my brave Britons I behold a race  
Dauntless in war, but mild and just in peace ;  
Fill'd with that public spirit, whose pure aim,  
And prompt activity extend improvement,  
And fir'd with every great and generous view :  
As if rare properties of air and soil  
Could add peculiar energy to nature ;  
Refine their heads and animate their hearts.

*Els.* Whate'er the valued qualities they boast,  
They cannot prosper, when by their misfortunes  
Heaven plainly seems unfriendly to their cause.

*Alf.* 'Twill be the duty, then, of noble souls  
To leave an high example of their firmness  
To future times ; to brave superior power  
Even at the price of life, and be the last  
To flatter pride, and to submit to wrong.

*Els.* This were resistance to the Almighty's  
will.

*Alf.* No ; rather say, 'twere a devout submission  
To that great trial of our faith and valour  
Th'Almighty has impos'd on us : nor think,

Elsitha, virtue can be chang'd by fortune.  
Oft, o'er the field, in which the patriot strives  
For blameless victory, do gazing angels,  
Forewarn'd of his inevitable fate,  
Shed their celestial tears, and, when he falls,  
They venerate the spot as holy ground.

*Els.* This praise of slaughterous deeds might  
suit a heathen;

But, Alfred, thee far less, who art a Christian,  
And oft would'st talk of thy contempt of war.  
Our mild religion, well thou know'st, enjoins  
Pardon of injuries, and bids us live  
In mutual love, fraternity, and peace.

*Alf.* These Heaven-taught maxims often may  
mislead

Through feeble judgment, or dark policy,  
That, envying the fair fame to virtue given,  
May feign its worth imperfect to supplant it :  
Though, when its arts have prosper'd, it must  
yield

To like necessity, or act less justly.  
To live in lasting peace, is, to the good,  
The most approv'd condition : but, if wrong,  
Be ever active to disturb their quiet,  
'Tis love of peace that arms them to control it.

*Els.* Then haste ; pursue the course thy reason  
warns,

And thy stern virtue grant what thou canst wish  
Of honour and renown. Lead forth with thee  
Those who may share thy danger, and enjoy  
Alike the loud applauses of the world.

Go ; you will leave at home, to humbler hopes,  
Your weeping wives, a melancholy band,  
Who, at their orphan children's future fate  
Shall soon be seen to tremble ; while, oppress'd  
By our contagious grief, the saddening land—

*Alf.* Nō ; I distrust not, leaving thee, that virtue  
Which is so fully tried ; thou wilt not cherish  
Such dangerous grief ; nor will the fair of Britain.  
Howe'er they move in that appointed sphere  
Which gives its wonted softness to their lustre,  
Withdrawn from notice ; yet they mark a course  
Steady and sure, and, while they charm, assist us.  
Their spotless faith, from mild discretion sprung,  
Would scorn to furnish arms to discontent,  
Or, with vain fears, conspire against their country.

*Els.* Spare thy reproof : acquit me of a weak-  
ness,

And one by thee so blam'd. I would obey thee ;  
Yes, would anticipate by ready deeds

Thy least desire ; yet say, while I behold thee,  
What is the secret, through whose mystic virtue  
(For such, perhaps, has been reveal'd to thee)  
A separation, cruel as I dread,  
Can prove our wish ?

*Alf.* To know it is our duty. [*Exit.*

SCENE VIII.

*Elsitba, Attendants.*

*Els.* Stay, Alfred, O ! [*swoons.*

*1 Off.* Look quickly to the queen !  
Support her fainting frame.

SCENE IX.

*Elsitba, Attendants. To them enter Editha.*

*1 Off.* Lend, aged matron,  
Thy aid. Untoward chance !—But she revives.

*Els.* Afford, good friend, the hospitable shelter  
Of thy adjoining roof, that short repose

May there recall my dissipated spirits!

I feel my strength returning--Now lead on.

[*Exeunt Els. and Ed. into the cottage.*

SCENE X.

*Attendants.*

1 *Off.* Go, tell the prince that Alfred has left  
orders

For our departure. We attend the troops ;  
As destin'd to escort our helpless band. [*Exit one.*

SCENE XI.

*Attendants.*

1 *Off.* The queen's recover'd strength, ere long,  
my friends,  
Will prove the signal of our journey. [*a noise*  
*under ground*] Heav'ns!  
What noise was that?

2 *Off.* 'Twas surely not far off. [*noise repeated.*



1 *Off.* Alas! the enemy, past doubt, prevail'd  
To undermine this station. All is lost,  
Unless we prosper in the attempt to bear  
The queen to safety. Follow, and assist me.  
*[they approach the cottage.]*

## SCENE XII.

*Attendants. To them,*  
*[noise repeated.] enter Ceoluph, with his men from*  
*the subterranean passage; stops the Attendants,*  
*and speaks to them.*

*Ceo.* Stir you no further, but resign the charge  
Ye cannot save; I claim it for the Danes.  
*[to the Soldiers.]* Do you obey the orders ye  
receiv'd.

Fill up that passage straight, to stop the foe;  
This is the cottage ye must first surround;  
And marching slow and silent through the wood,  
Soon will ye reach the unsuspecting guards,  
And find their terror second your assault.

*[Exeunt Soldiers.]*

## SCENE XIII.

*Ceoluph, Attendants ; and some Soldiers.*

1 *Off.* We hope, howe'er success has crown'd  
your efforts,

That civil treatment will not be denied

Your royal captives. In compassion grant it.

*Ceo.* Your treatment will be found what ye  
deserve:

If ye presume on daring violence,

Or are detected in intrigue, beware ;

The eyes of these surrounding troops are on you.

[*Exit.*

## SCENE XIV.

*Attendants.*

1 *Off.* [*after a silence.*] We, who so little could  
foresee the future,  
Harbour'd just fear ; while our best chiefs have  
err'd

Who deem'd us safe. So weak is human wisdom !

2 *Off.* I dread to think how knowledge of her  
fortune

May overwhelm the queen. What dost thou  
counsel ?

1 *Off.* Far be it from us, with imprudent haste,  
To inform the queen of these o'erpowering news :  
Till it prove fruitless to conceal them longer,  
Spite of our ceaseless efforts. No, my friends,  
Rather let us dissemble our reflections ;  
And do thou, harper, wake some air, to banish  
Suspicion of our terrible reverse ;  
As only thoughtful of thy custom'd office.  
I will forthwith endeavour to detain her  
Till some more favourable turn of fortune. [*Exit.*]

*SCENE XV.*

*Attendants.*

SONG.

*O nations; urged by hostile fate.  
To brave, in adverse ranks the war,*

*Taught Heaven's mild lore, nor mov'd of late  
The praise of savage feats to abhor ;*

*For ever quench your kindling rage ;  
And ah ! no more that vengeance waste,  
Doom'd for the impious head above ;  
Or timely seek, with rival haste,  
Such lenient aid of peaceful love  
As may its lingering ills assuage.*

*Ere, on each shore, in strength secure,  
We saw the invaders with amaze,  
Our drooping country could endure,  
With better hope, tempestuous days.*

*Now hapless Christians ease no more,  
By social deeds, their common way,  
Among the rocks encircling life ;  
But rudely forc'd asunder stray,  
And menac'd by the storms of strife,  
Thoughtful of help enjoy'd before.*

*Thou, Ireland, long thy silent sighs  
With Britain's mingled, shalt remain ;*

*From Heaven imploring future ties,  
That mutual may your sons maintain*

*In endless union, bless'd and free ;  
Whence the fair isles, with strength combin'd,  
Shall happiness, in every land,  
From arms protect, and wrong design'd ;  
And amid waves, securely stand,  
The citadels of liberty.*

## SCENE XVI.

*Attendants. To them,  
Enter Elsitba, Edmund, and 1 Officer, from the  
cottage.*

*Els.* No, do not urge me longer to delay:  
Heaven has, I trust, inspir'd, and will support me ;  
You see me ready to obey with firmness  
The late commands of Alfred ; with what haste  
You choose we follow.

*[the Attendants seem thunderstruck.*  
*But what means that air  
Of blank confusion, and that backward silence?*

*Edm.* [*pointing behind the scenes.*] O mother,  
what a crowd is there, and there!

I did not see those men, when first I came.

*Els.* Ah! now the riddle is expounded clearly;  
Yes, the successful enemy possesses  
This spot, and holds us prisoners. Well I know it:  
But say, (if it be true,) say, where is Alfred?  
Sure he escap'd not, and a tenfold fury  
Prepares to sacrifice this valiant cause  
Of many a pagan's death; this dread of Danes!  
I know what ye would say: yes, at this moment  
Does Alfred fall. [*weeps.*

[*Edmund runs with an intèntion of going out.*

*1 Off.* Where dost thou haste, young prince?

*Edm.* I'll go to all the soldiers round, and ask  
them

To spare my father.

*1 Off.* Prince, thy father's safe.

We have not heard the king partakes our fortune  
In this mishap, and trust he fled ere this:  
He is beyond the power of all these soldiers.

*Edm.* Pray tell me, do they want to kill us too?

*Els.* Come, come, my son; let us retire from  
hence,

As suits the wretched, where, with thoughts compos'd,

We may implore due fortitude from him

Who can deliver us from all distress,

And conquer all our enemies. This way.

[*Exit Elsitba, and Edmund, into the cottage.*]

SCENE XVII.

*Attendants.*

1 *Off.* How touching is this state of tender youth,

That half discerns, and rather on worst woes

Looks with the eye of curiosity,

Than with the heart of fear: ev'n the queen seems

Too far by pious resignation rais'd

Above the sad calamity she suffers:

To let dejection lower upon her brow;

Yet much I fear these Danes; and see advance

The British lord, hither conducting one.

Something is, sure, projected, which concerns us.

## SCENE XVIII.

*Attendants. To them, enter Ceoluph, and Dane.*

*Ceo.* Abandon straight, to one more worthy trust,  
The place where our insulted lenity  
Permitted you to stay. Ye shall no more  
Repeat your treasons.

*1 Off.* What are they, my lord?

*Ceo.* 'Tis rumour'd ye have harp'd seditious  
tunes

That praise the ancient friendship of our isles,  
So to corrupt the Irish.

*1 Off.* No such thought,  
My lord, had we; nor e'er could have surmis'd  
An insignificant attempt to cheer  
The drooping queen had drawn this deep attention.

*Ceo.* Retire, and to this valiant Dane resign  
Your forfeit station. [Exit.]



## SCENE XIX.

*Dane, Attendants.*

*Dane.* It perhaps were best,  
You first appriz'd her of the purpos'd change;  
Lest unprepar'd she ill support the trial.

1 *Off.* Soldier, we thank thee for the generous  
counsel;  
And trust it bodes a spirit that inclines not  
To load her weakness with increase of sorrow.  
[*Exit into cottage.*

## SCENE XX.

*Dane, Attendants.*

2 *Off.* Eager to shew, in promptness of obedience,  
A slight return of kindness, we retire,  
And wait at distance, Dane, thy farther orders:  
Ev'n gratitude's most unimportant favours  
Gain from the just regard. [*Exeunt Attendants.*

## SCENE XXI.

*Dane. To him,*

*Enter Elsitba, and 1 Officer, from the cottage.*

1 *Off.* The Dane is yonder.

[*Exit,*

## SCENE XXII.

*Elsitba, Dane.*

*Els.* Surpris'd at the respect, I learn, good  
soldier,

Thou pay'st to wretched captives, I came forth;  
Willing to testify a grateful spirit.

*Dane.* My conduct, princess, is, howe'er it seem,  
What justice and humanity require,  
And my religion dictates. Were it different,  
'Twould be at variance with its holy precepts;  
And draw Heaven's known displeasure.

*Els.* At thy words  
I am perplex'd. Say, art thou not a Dane?

*Dane.* Those hard-fought battles, where, for  
many a year

I strove, accompanied by Danish troops,  
Bear ample witness, princess, to my country.

*Els.* Suspect not that, in any country, Dane,  
I doubt the worth of virtue such as thine.  
Much I admire whatever unknown stock  
Teems with such noble fruit ; and think the hand  
Of Heaven has scatter'd wide the precious seeds  
Of true religion, and will bless the harvest.  
What light so surely guides thy happy course?

*Dane.* One that is darken'd by no cloud of  
error,  
As thou wilt own.

*Els.* In vain I seek thy meaning.

*Dane.* When lately Ireland, added to our con-  
quests,  
Receiv'd our bands, to mingle, as chance led,  
Among her own inhabitants, who, long  
Ere this, profess'd the peaceful faith of Christ,  
We, at their blameless, inoffensive manners  
Felt secret awe.

*Els.* Saint Patrick, well I know,  
Had civiliz'd the island where he preach'd,  
And made it honour'd in the Christian world,

We name it, for this cause, the Isle of Saints.  
But hasten to thy tale, and say what follow'd.

*Dane.* Full many, influenc'd by the fair example,  
Embrac'd with ardour the divine religion,  
And all remain'd, except a few ; but I,  
Having the confidence of those who led us,  
Attended them, at their command, to invade  
The coasts of England.

*Els.* Has, then, providence  
So unexpectedly display'd its bounty,  
As, in the depth of our despair, to shew us  
Favour so rare, and in our prison-guard,  
Bestow the best protector ?

*Dane.* To that title, princess,  
My conduct is not destitute of claim.  
Not to win glory, but restrain the rage  
Of barbarous countrymen, at length, in war  
Is my sole care. In these surrounding fields,  
Oft have the helpless, of each sex and age,  
Obtain'd their safety through my secret counsel,  
Or needful mediation, from the Danes.

*Els.* Bless'd is the doctrine whose benign effects  
Are thus conspicuous !

*Dane.* No ; the progress yet,

Princess, is small, which Christianity  
Has made; and, till this time, its peeping dawn  
Hardly gives notice of its cheerful day.  
But, by degrees, o'er Europe and the world,  
I trust, its peaceful influence will extend;  
One mode of policy, one form of virtue  
Shall science slowly plan for human use,  
(Unless dissentious vanity obstruct it)  
Shall steadily remove the ills of life,  
And every bar to happiness and virtue;  
Till, while we chance to wonder at the change,  
And then look back upon a barbarous age,  
We bless the heavenly cause which could produce it.

*[Exit, following Attendants: the Queen slowly, as in devout contemplation, enters the cottage.]*

## ACT. III.

## SCENE I.

*The orders having been executed for filling the arched passage, the prospect is discovered which it concealed before ; and while the rest of the background seems shaded by passing clouds, exhibits the stream, after it has reached the valley, serpentine through a variegated country.*

*Enter Ceoluph, and Vassal.*

*Vass.* The work that yonder was enjoin'd the  
Irish,  
I see, my lord, is done. That way is barr'd  
Against the enemy. 'Tis fortunate  
They did not fail us.

*Ceo.* Yet thy words alarm me :  
The prisoners must not be entrusted longer  
To spirits so inclin'd. Where is the Dane ?

*Vass.* I saw him late among the queen's attendants,

Who were dismiss'd, disposing them in safety.

*Ceo.* Here will I wait him. Say, meanwhile,  
if more

Thy spies inform'd thee of the daring language  
These Irish held.

*Vass.* Some praise the wide renown  
And virtues of the king ; some the queen's beauty,  
And mourn her own distresses, and her son's.  
Others lament the oppression of the Danes,  
Vowing that almost, to support its ills,  
Christian obedience fails. The loyal, too,  
They say, can feel, and, in necessity  
Behold a plea that sanctifies resistance.

*Ceo.* And shall we trust to such the royal prisoners?

*Vass.* Far be it from our thoughts, my honour'd lord.

*Ceo.* Shall I, for pity of their sufferings, leave them

With Christians, who might pay them much respect,  
But would betray their trust ? What is to me  
Their mild captivity, or soften'd sorrow ?  
They would, I doubt not, rather than by foes,

Be guarded by the Irish ; but if such  
As are acknowledg'd friends, o'erlook their welfare,

And careless of the caution it enjoins us,  
Forfeit our confidence, let them be thank'd for't.

*Vass.* My lord, I own abuse of such indulgence  
Well merits punishment.

*Ceo.* And they shall have it.

Yes, the barbarians will ere long surround them ;  
That wanton spirit which, remov'd till now,  
Has been without an object, shall be seen  
In full display : harshness, or insolence,  
Pain, or whate'er besides caprice inflicts  
Shall seem a grievous change—

*Vass.* Softly, my lord ;  
For we may hence be heard.—And see, at length,  
The Dane approaching, whom we waited here.

*Ceo.* Go swiftly to my troops : let them attend  
Without delay. I will inform the Dane  
Of what we purpose, that he be prepar'd  
To hasten, with the Irish, from this station,  
While we, for present safety, take their office.

[*Exit Vassal.*]



## SCENE II.

*Ceoluph. To him, enter Dane.*

*Dane.* I learn, my lord, 'twas thy desire to  
see me :

And hence am come.

*Ceo.* I sought this conference,  
'Tis true ; and my intention was to tell thee  
We need no longer the attendance, Dane,  
Of thee, or of the Irish ; will dispense  
In future with thy care of this our charge,  
And see, that 'tis dispos'd of as shall suit  
The common cause.

*Dane.* I dive not to thy meaning.  
Hast thou authority, my lord, to make  
This change ? Canst thou produce our general's  
orders ?

*Ceo.* The authority by which, to guard this spot,  
I late conducted thee, I now exert,  
Requiring thy departure.

*Dane.* If, as then,  
Thou canst assure me of the chief's consent,

(Whom only I obey) I shall at once  
Confess my right now to resign my trust,  
And thine as doubtful, to succeed to it.  
Till this, it may not be.

*Ceo.* And dost thou think  
The Danes who, for the welfare of their tribes,  
Invited my assistance, will pronounce me  
So useless now, and of such small account,  
That my exertions for the common cause  
Must be prescrib'd by peasants?

*Dane.* To nought else,  
Proud lord, but to the general and his rules  
Did I expect obedience at thy hands.  
This contumelious style thou hast assum'd,  
Hadst thou but known and weigh'd the esteem I  
boast,  
Might have appear'd less wise.

*Ceo.* I see thy purpose ;  
'Tis to create delays, and, with this band  
Of false auxiliaries, beneath thy orders,  
Expect the proper moment of desertion ;  
But, ere 'tis long, thy precious charge, rely on't,  
Shall be securely plac'd beyond thy power.

*Dane.* Unmanner'd lord, I will not vie with thee  
In base scurrility ; but, be assur'd,

Nor thou, nor any other, with loud words  
Can daunt me from my duty: that, I trust,  
Of which my honour is the pledge, is safe.

*SCENE III.*

*Ceoluph, Dane. To them, enter the Soldiers of  
Ceoluph.*

*Geo.* 'Tis only known by proof.

*Dane.* I shrink not from it.

*[Ceoluph goes hastily towards the cottage, the Dane following, who prevents his entrance. A struggle ensues at the door, during which Ceoluph draws his sword and wounds the Dane. He, being struck, staggers towards the front of the stage, against a tree.]*

*SCENE IV.*

*Ceoluph, Dane, English Soldiers. To them, enter  
Elsitha, and Edmund running out before her.*

*Els.* What causes this dispute? if we, by chance,  
Should be the subject of your conference,

Perhaps, by our compliance, we might give  
To both content. Alas! good Dane, thou bleed'st.

## SCENE V.

*Elsitba, Edmund, Ceolupb, Dane, E. Soldiers.*  
*To them, enter the Irish as lookers on.*

*Ceo.* [seizing Edmund.] This is my prize.

*Els.* O spare my child!

*[swoons, and is carried in by some Irish.]*

## SCENE VI.

*Edmund, Ceolupb, Dane; E. Soldiers, I. Soldiers.*

*Dane.* [advancing.] Mark, soldiers,  
Maim'd as I am, how, in so fair a cause,  
I now unsheath this sword, and bid you follow  
To save our honour from this lawless lord.  
He, by these insults, on the Danish name  
Would cast foul stains, and, our reputed friend,  
Would trample on our discipline; but you

Know better, as I trust, the brave man's duty,  
Than to see wrested forcibly away  
What is confided to us.

*Ceo.* Shew too, you  
My faithful troops, ye are not aw'd by those  
Who, under the false garb of law and order,  
Ensure rebellion.

[*The Irish furiously charge Ceoluph's Soldiers,  
rescue Edmund, and form a circle round him.*]

*Ceo.* Ye now boast success;  
But ere your plots are ripe, one, at your cost,  
Shall come to mar them, whose authority  
Ye may perhaps allow.

[*Exeunt Ceoluph and E. Soldiers.*]

SCENE VII.

*Edmund, Dane, I. Soldiers.*

*Dane.* Let one invite  
The attendants back. I cannot think the general  
(At least when he has listen'd to my counsel)  
Would here exact this unavailing harshness.

Those shall approach the prisoners, whose attendance

Use has made grateful; so ye fail not, soldiers,  
To watch and guard them with due vigilance.

Go, and remember. [Exeunt I. Soldiers.]

SCENE VIII.

*Edmund, Dane.*

*Dane.* Here, young prince, remain,  
Where thou art safe, and need'st no longer fear  
The sight of strangers. [Exit *Dane.*]

SCENE IX.

*Edmund.* To him, enter Attendants.

1 *Off.* [to the Attendants.] When he joins his  
troops,  
Towards whom he goes, the Dane will soon perceive

A spirit less devoted to his cause  
Than he expects. They all resent this insult  
On so esteem'd a leader, whose persuasion  
Alone preserv'd the Danes their loyalty.  
For so 'tis said. One cannot read their purpose;  
But they aver, that to defend the queen  
And prince from harm, their lives are readiest  
offerings.

2 *Off.* Then may Lord Ceoluph's return, with  
proof

Of the Dane's countenance to these his measures,  
Be their immediate signal of revolt.

1 *Off.* 'Tis not unlikely; and we soon may see  
Where tend their doubtful murmurs. So, young  
prince,

Thou wast involv'd, 'tis said, in a strange scene  
Of tumult and confusion, which, I doubt not,  
Surpass'd whatever thou had'st known before.  
Yet are we glad that, through the aid of Heaven,  
We now may give thee joy of the escape.  
But how is this? thou'lt be a warrior, prince;  
Thou art unterrified.

*Edm.* [*running towards the harp, and sounding  
it.*] O yes.

1 *Off.* What, prince!

Why dost thou draw thy hand across that harp?

*Edm.* Did we not beat them?

*1 Off.* Beat them! yes, you did.

*Edm.* O, I remember that my father us'd

To play upon his harp the songs of Ossian,  
Who went to battle, fought, and, when return'd,  
Would sing so nobly of the deeds he saw,  
That, after he had done, I ask'd my father  
When he would let me have a sword and spear,  
And take me with him to the wars. [*to the harper.*

Pray tell me,

Canst thou not sing so too?

*1 Off.* 'Tis, be assur'd,

What the queen's illness recommends. Yes, raise  
Some song of triumph, cheerful in its strains,  
While I convey to her, without delay,  
The important tidings of congenial sort  
Our alter'd state permits. This too were useful.

[*Exit 1 Officer into the cottage.*



## SCENE X.

*Edmund, Attendants.*

## SONG.

*That harp, with Scotland's praise of old  
Enchanting, o'er the festive ball,  
Where Ossian sate, the amaze of all,  
Now Britain's undistinguish'd deeds to unfold,  
Wakes sweetly, at the poet's call.  
"Bless'd be the day," he sings, "the auspicious day,  
When strong resistance curb'd our foes;  
When, seen conspicuous o'er his vanquish'd clay,  
The funeral mound of Hubba rose.*

*"Ye waves, that lash the lofty shore  
Whence his returning squadron flew,  
Ye might not Britain's virtue view  
Alone; but from the grots of ocean boar,  
Far, far remote, on labour new  
Intent, her chief obscur'd in base attire  
His warlike limbs, and bore the charms*

*Of music to the haunt of licence dire,  
That fury throng'd with adverse arms.*

*Pleas'd at his mirthful mood, and pleas'd  
At his soft harp's bewitching tone,  
While he each secret spies unknown,  
The warriors cherish the sweet bane, that eas'd  
The heart of care ; yet, threat'ning shewn,  
Soon shall his myriads leave the forest-glade.  
Near valour, bursting from the bands  
Of faint despondence, with resistless aid  
Obedient faith still ready stands."*

*O realm of ever-living strains,  
Thus round thy lakes of Britain sings  
Some bard, nor shall the slumbering strings  
Pass silently the future wreaths she gains,  
Or sway'd by one, or many kings ;  
Nor shall her sons of glory want their praise ;  
With arms, or counsels, skill'd from wrong  
To guard a state, or trace the doubtful ways  
Of science, or sustain the song.*

## SCENE XI.

*Edmund, Attendants. To them, re-enter 1 Officer.*

*2 Off.* How fares the queen?

*1 Off.* Recover'd from the effect  
Of her long trance so lately, she appears  
As one insensible to what is said.  
Yet have I left the tidings, well assur'd  
They quickly will restore her drooping spirits.

*2 Off.* The door is mov'd. Can it denote her  
coming?

## SCENE XII.

*Edmund, Attendants. To them, enter Elsitba very  
weak, leaning on Editba, from the cottage.*

*Els.* No sooner did I catch the sounds that  
told

Something of what had pass'd, than straight I flew  
To learn it all. Ah! I perceive 'tis so.

Good folks, I thank you much, if it was you  
That sav'd my child.

1 *Off.* Princess, we have besides  
A cause of farther joy ; our present hopes—

*Els.* Talk not to me of hope : that is for others.  
Once I, too, hop'd, but long calamity  
And frequent disappointment prov'd it vain.—  
Alas ! my strength endures not this exertion,  
And I am faint. Conduct me, worthy friend,  
Back to the cottage.—[*to Edmund.*] Thou canst  
aid to raise,  
If aught can, from her present feeble state,  
Thy mother : come, and cheer me with thy looks,  
[*he runs to Elsitba and leans fondly upon her.*  
[*to Editba.*] Support my steps. [*looking on Ed-*  
*mund.*] Do not stir from me, child.  
[*Exeunt Elsitba, Editba, and Edmund into*  
*the cottage.*

### SCENE XIII.

*Attendants.*

1. *Sold.* [*without.*] Long live King Alfred !

1 *Off.* These are sounds which rate

Our fortune far superior to our hopes.  
What may they mean?

*SCENE XIV.*

*Attendants. To them, enter Mervin, and I.  
Soldiers.*

*1 Off.* Prince, we rejoice to see thee,  
However unexpected, join us here.

*Merv.* Summon'd in Alfred's venerated name,  
At length the Irish own their ancient friends,  
And have surrender'd to our force the prisoners.  
A guard sufficient will, without delay,  
Transport you to the place you sought before,  
Far from the neighbourhood of war and danger.

*1 Off.* 'Tis fortunate the Dane could not prevent  
Their just submission.

*Merv.* Faithful to his trust,  
He long endeavour'd ; but the love they bore him  
Only avail'd to stipulate such favour  
As we were no less forward to allow.  
He has his freedom.

*1 Off.* We obey thy orders.

*Merv.* Then hasten your departure. Go, since  
now

There is no hindrance.

*1 Off.* [*looking behind the scenes.*] Yet that  
new appearance

Which cross'd my sight this moment, scarcely  
proves it.

*Merv.* [*looking the same way.*] Who is the  
chief that yonder seems with threats,  
With a loud voice, and wild impetuous gestures,  
To parley with our troops, ranged farthest off?

*1 Off.* 'Tis Ceoluph, that treacherous lord;  
who went

From hence just now, to seek the Danish general,  
And authorize undue severity,  
By his consent, on those he, raving here,  
Entitled rebels. By the fate of war,  
He finds them distant, and returns alone  
To wreak his vengeance on them. Led by thee,  
We shall not fear a trial of our strength.

*Merv.* No; the adjustment of this difference  
rests

On us two only. No more blood be spill'd!

*1 Off.* Prince, do not hazard, without need, thy  
person,

Nor slight our ready aid.

*Merv.* I charge you, stay.

[*draws his sword, and exit.*

SCENE XV.

*Attendants, and I. Soldiers.*

1 *Off.* The event will be a source of general  
sorrow

To all the army, should it be perceiv'd,  
In this brave prince's death, unfortunate :  
His ardent valour, and the abhorrence felt  
By clear integrity, at darkest baseness,  
Are the resistless prompters of his rage.  
O may the vigour which they lend his arm  
Command success !

2 *Off.* Thou heard'st their clashing swords?

1 *Off.* Perhaps from thence thou mayst dis-  
cover somewhat

Of this momentous battle.

2 *Off.* Scarce I see them :

The drooping foliage so impedes my view,  
And now a rapid impulse carries them .

Behind the thickest shade.

1 *Off.* Advance, and mark them.

2 *Off.* [*going, stops.*] That is the prince, most surely, who appears

With signs of agitation, and directs

Hither his course.

1 *Off.* May it bode good!

SCENE XVI.

*Attendants, I. Soldiers. To them, enter Mervin.*

*Merv.* I bring you

The news, that Alfred hither leads in haste

His earnest bands, though I fear the cause

Is ill success ; whose mournful signs are witness'd

In general flight. Our doubt will shortly cease.

SCENE XVII.

*Mervin, Attendants, I. Soldiers. To them, enter  
Alfred, and E. Soldiers.*

*Alf.* Prince, thus surrounded, as thou art, by  
foes.



What am I to suppose ? Thou, surely, hast not  
Fall'n by the fate of battle in their power ;  
But if thou have, my ready arms shall strive,  
With English valour's aid, to wrest thee from  
    them.

*Merv.* No, Alfred ; they are friends, not foes,  
    thou seest,  
Who vie with Englishmen in acts of valour.

*Alf.* Such new society might raise, in some,  
A doubt, if thou, prince, art become our foe ;  
Or rather those, more fortunately friends,  
Who lately warr'd against us. But thy faith  
In me prevents it.

*Merv.* Lo ! a proof of this.

*SCENE XVIII.*

*Alfred, Mervin, Attendants, I. and E. Soldiers.*

*To them, enter Ceoluph wounded, brought in  
by Vassal, and others.*

*Alf.* How shall I praise thee, gallant prince,  
    enough ?

Yes, 'tis a noble proof—

[*They carry Ceoluph towards the cottage, accord-  
ing to their intention of entering it, and one  
who precedes is about to open the door.*

But see, his hand

Rais'd up, as if to warn them he would speak.

*Ceo.* [*in a despairing voice.*] No; stir not farther—set me down—my wound  
Asks sudden rest; and while I yet retain  
Life's lessening remnant, anxiously I seek  
To put it all to profit.

*Vass.* If, my lord,  
Thy purpose be to summon to the attack  
Our troops, how great soe'er king Alfred's force,  
We stand prepar'd—

*Ceo.* [*in the same tone.*] My purpose was not  
such :

Let them approach him, but exhibit looks  
Of meek submission, not of fierce defiance;  
And to forgiveness of that breach of faith,  
Of which I solely was the unworthy cause,  
Waken his mercy. Let them too (and say  
My counsel is the richest legacy  
A chieftain could bequeath them ) ever shun  
The paths that lead to treason. Senseless hate,  
And senseless envy of superior rank,  
Be banish'd from their breast. Let them not  
think  
That gain is happiness, nor, for its gifts,

Hope plunder in rebellion. Let them, too,  
Beware of those, who, by the lure of reason,  
Would draw them to destruction. Nay, and urge  
them

Ev'n to distrust their own self-counsell'd thoughts,  
Prompting precarious change.

*Vass.* My lord, I will.

*Ceo.* 'Tis thus my faithful troops may satisfy  
Their conscience, and their God—I can no more!  
Ev'n now I feel a sudden faintness warn  
My end approaches fast, and from my veins  
The life-blood issuing with a swifter flow,  
Leaves cold these torpid limbs—O injur'd monarch—

Heav'n speed him, and have mercy on my—Oh!

[*dies.*

*Alf.* 'Tis o'er. Ye vassals of the unhappy lord,  
Bear hence the body, and, with decent rites  
Let it be honour'd. To yourselves I grant  
Free pardon. Go, let his judicious counsel  
Sink in your souls, and prove your future guide.

[*Exeunt with the body.*

## SCENE XIX.

*Alfred, Mervin, Attendants, E. and I. Soldiers.*

*Alf.* Thy service, prince, is now again desir'd ;  
And for the public cause, I would to thee  
Entrust a message.

*Merv.* Readily I take  
The office, Alfred, though the unwelcome task  
Be to give sanction to disgraceful terms  
Of peace, as conquer'd, with the haughty foe.

*Alf.* Then listen to what terms I grant the  
Danes:

Pent, as they are, within yon distant castle,  
In lessen'd numbers, and with humbler spirit—

*Merv.* Repeat thy words. What! have we  
gain'd the day?

*Alf.* Yes, never Alfred has beheld, till now,  
His power so firmly fix'd, or stretch'd so wide  
Over this beauteous isle. The king of Scotland,  
The prudent Gregory, for his country's good,  
Had wisely sought protection from our own,  
And sent his brave auxiliars to the war,

As subject to our sway. Since which event,  
Almost the sovereignty of Britain's mine.

*Merv.* Almost!—'tis quite: I hail thee king  
of Britain.

*Alf.* This cannot be. Thou, for thy state, I  
know

Dost homage; but thy brother Anarawd,  
Who rules the territory of Northern Wales,  
Long persever'd to hinder it, and from us  
Withheld his aid in the destructive war  
The Danes and we have waged; yet 'twere, in  
truth,

What both our interests alike requir'd.

*Merv.* Then will they meet no farther op-  
position.

The Danish fleet, that hover'd round his coast,  
Held him in awe, and to this cause is ow'd  
The involuntary silence he preserves,  
And has regretted long. On thy success,  
(Commission'd secretly from him I speak,)  
He holds himself from henceforth, and his king-  
dom

Subjected to thy mild and just dominion.

*E. Sold.* Long live great Alfred, the first king  
of Britain!

*Merv.* Prepar'd to take thy message, I attend  
The instruction of thy tongue. What punishment  
Does Alfred mean to award to lawless bands,  
Who long have wasted every fertile plain;  
And mark'd their steps with blood?

*Alf.* Such punishment  
As Christian justice asks.

*Merv.* Speak then; what is it?

*Alf.* Different degrees of favour must be  
shewn,  
To various worth.

*Merv.* 'Twere worthy Alfred's wisdom.

*Alf.* Then, since our mild religion teaches us  
To love, and to forgive our enemies,  
I shall not hesitate. To every Dane  
I grant his liberty.

*Merv.* His liberty?

*Alf.* And to all those who will embrace our  
faith,  
And leave their pagan gods, to such I give  
Sufficient lands, with honest industry,  
Spread through the middle counties of our realm,  
To thrive in peace.

*Merv.* So merciful a conduct,  
Was oft thy noble policy; but now,

While prostrate at thy feet the foe is seen,  
And 'tis no longer needful, dost thou hold  
The deed is wise?

*Alf.* 'Tis just, and therefore wise.

*Merv.* I swiftly bear these tidings, which will  
soon

O'ercome their minds with unexpected goodness;  
And, if I augur right, no truer subjects  
Their gratitude will leave to upbraid their honour.

[*Exit.*

SCENE XX.

*Alfred, Attendants, E. and I. Soldiers.*

*Alf.* You, men of Ireland, rest protected here,  
Awhile our subjects, till the Danish force,  
Enfeebled now by this our victory,  
Rouze your brave countrymen to free themselves  
From an oppressive yoke. In after times  
I trust the nations will preserve with care  
Their ancient friendship, and all foreign lands  
Envy the fortune of the British Isles.

*I. Sold.* Long live great Alfred, patron of the  
Irish!

*E. and I. Sold.* May Irishmen and Britons seem  
one people!

*Alf.* Our triumph to complete, it yet remains  
That we diffuse the gladness where 'tis due.

I hasten to the queen : do you meanwhile  
Resign yourselves to joy, nor let the harp  
Speak of aught else but Britain's future glory.

[*Exit into the cottage.*]

### SCENE XXI.

*Attendants, E. and I. Soldiers.*

### SONG.

*Slow descending from the plains  
Of liquid ether, and the peopled sky,  
The converse of the bless'd resign'd,  
Daughters of peace, th' inventive arts from high  
Glance sweet on their remember'd earth.  
Floating on colour'd clouds, they seek, inclin'd,  
What guardian spirit, whence he reigns,*



*With beck'ning band, permitted from above,  
And voice exulting, bade them speed,  
Round whom himself, and powers aerial love,  
(To win the noblest realm decreed)  
Their blessings wide t' extend, and wake their  
fruits to birth.*

*Heavenly barbingers of joy,  
Come, and below, enchanting nearer, smile,  
Stor'd with the secret skill ye boast  
Or wealth t' improve, or poverty beguile :  
Come ; and the trackless desert sow  
With autumn's waving pride ; but o'er the coast  
Let commerce all her sons employ  
T' adorn, with glories of remotest lands,  
Wide cities, your stupendous work.  
For all things own, with well-instructed hands,  
Each others aid, ye grant to lurk  
Unprais'd no genuine charm, no labour useless  
grow.*

*Not the thought-inspiring stream  
Of fam'd Ilyssus, nor the sage's bowers ;  
Not Tibur's banks your steps attend ;  
'Twas Britain's Genius, from the bordering  
flowers*

*Of limpid Tbames that call'd so long  
Your radiant beauty, where in pride ascend  
Augusta's towers, and neighbouring gleam;  
Or verdant paths divide the elms of Sbene,  
Or forests clothe the winding-shore.  
What splendour then shall raise the vivid scene,  
When you refinement's gladness pour,  
And virtue wider blooms around th'expecting  
throng.*

1 *Off.* I wonder what the intentions of the king  
Are in this weighty matter, which must soon  
Engage us, the formation of a state.  
All who survive the battle of this day  
Expect, I doubt not, here, upon the field,  
Some declaration of important kind.

2 *Off.* It must be so; for, ere the fight began,  
'Tis said, he, with the hopes of liberty,  
Of new and better laws, to fortify,  
And to extend our rights, inspir'd their courage.  
What it may be, I guess not; if we credit  
The voice of rumour, he intends to lay  
Such privileges down, secur'd by law,  
As common virtue scarcely could resign.

1 *Off.* 'Tis safer to distrust those wandering  
tales;

He means us good, but we shall see, if now  
A youthful monarch at his reign's first outset,  
Dare liberate subjects from undue dependence,  
And give an earnest of regard to freedom.

## SCENE XXII.

*Attendants E. and I. Enter Alfred, Elsitba, recovered, but pale, and Edmund.*

*Alf.* Soldiers and friends, the toil of battle past,  
'Tis now our business elsewhere to seek forth  
Some better place of rest; so long condemn'd  
To bear the weather's worst inclemencies,  
Or find, at most, in some half ruin'd hovel,  
Or hut, a shelter from the raging storm,  
Each will be lodg'd beneath his roof again,  
And mansions which the Danes have long possess'd  
Are open to receive us; there repose  
Will be as just as welcome; and yet now  
Activity becomes us, and a work  
Of lasting import asks the nation's efforts;  
Nor shall I shrink from toil, or sacrifice  
Of rights, in this revision of our laws.

Oft in discourse ye hear of my intentions ;  
What ye were told do I confirm ; and promise  
To make you those concessions : on their base  
(Destin'd, I hope, to be the pride of man)  
The British constitution shall arise,  
And may it last till time shall be no more !

*[They look on each other in admiration. The English, Scots, Welch, and Irish following in procession, in their respective arms and dresses,*

*[Exeunt omnes.*

## NOTES.

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Page 41. *Think but of one Rome's sages, &c.*] Cicero's praise of this form of government is known, and Tacitus, though speaking in the style of objection, condemns it only as a fine theory, which had attracted the attention of philosophers, but was impossible to reduce to practice.

Page 48. *When Arthur fill'd the island throne.*] "Arthur, provoked to see the little advantage he had yet gained, and that victory yet continued in suspense, drew out his Caliburn, and calling upon the name of the Blessed Virgin, rushed forward with great violence into the thickest of the enemy's ranks; of whom (such was the merit of his prayers) not one escaped alive that felt the fury of his sword."

*Geoffery of Monmouth.*

Page 48. *Chiefs prostrate lie.*] Catalina vero longe a suis, inter hostium cadavera, repertus est, paulum etiam spirans, ferociamque animi, quam habuerat vivus, in vultu retinens. *Sall. Bell. Cat.*

NOTES.

This is still more closely imitated by Rucelai in his Rosmunda, in the following lines :—

E morto ritenea quella fierezza

Ch'avea quand'era vivo, e quell'orrore.

Page 48. *For toils like these.*]

Hac arte Pollux, hac vagus Hercules. *Hor.*

Page 49. *Their names alike, (if such be praise.)*]

Ossaque nomen

Hesperia in magna, si qua est ea gloria, signant.

*Virg.*

Page 86. *Nor shall her sons of glory.*] “Thy sons of glory many.” See Thompson, in his Summer; to whose patriotism, displayed in the rest of the paragraph, this fiction of Ossian’s harp alludes.

Page 102. *Winding-shore.*] The ancient name of Windsor.



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